

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 03121 281329Z

ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 L-03 EB-08 INT-05 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8368

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INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

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USDOE FOR HILL AND WARNKE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN, ENRG, SWEL, US, UR

SUBJECT: US-USSR ENERGY AGREEMENT: COAL (08.03): SCHMIDT
VISIT (REF TO SOVIET COAL-MINE ACCIDENT)

REF: (A) MOSCOW 3028, (B) MOSCOW 2661, (C) 77 MOSCOW A-238

1. DURING 27 FEBRUARY MEETING AT MIN COAL INDUSTRY (REF A)
SCICOUNS TRIED TO DRAW MINISTRY FOREIGN RELATIONS CHIEF
POCHENKOV OUT ON RECENT SOVIET COAL-MINE ACCIDENT (REF B).
POCHENKOV REPEATED, QUITE UNCOMFORTABLY, THE INFORMATION
FROM THE PRAVDA ARTICLE AND CLAIMED THAT HE HAD NO FURTHER
INFORMATION, SINCE "INVESTIGATION IS NOT COMPLETE." HE
ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS NOT FIRST SUCH METHANE-GAS MINE
ACCIDENT, BUT STATED THAT THEY OCCURRED
"QUITE RARELY." HE INFERRED THAT MINE WAS FULLY INSTRUMEN-
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 03121 281329Z

TED, AND THAT SOVIETS STILL DO NOT KNOW WHAT WENT WRONG.

2. SCICOUNS NOTED THAT SAFETY IS A MAJOR CONCERN
IN MINING OPERATIONS IN THE U.S. NOTING THE RECENT
INITIATION OF U.S.-SOVIET COOPERATION IN REACTOR SAFETY
AS A PRECEDENT, SCICOUNS SUGGESTED THAT MINISTRY
CONSIDER DISCUSSING MINE SAFETY DURING UPCOMING SCHMIDT

VISIT TO SEE WHETHER THERE ARE OVERLAPPING INTERESTS IN THE TWO NATIONAL PROGRAMS. POCHENKOV STATED THAT MINISTRY WOULD CONSIDER IT, ADDING THAT QUESTION OF POSSIBLE EXCHANGES ON SAFETY COULD BE CONSIDERED DURING SCHMIDT VISIT.

3. COMMENT. THE NORMALLY AFFABLE, GARRULOUS POCHENKOV LITERALLY PULLED BACK FROM THE TABLE WHEN QUESTION OF MINE ACCIDENT AROSE. CLEARLY ON A VERY SHORT LEASH ON WHAT HE COULD SAY ABOUT THE ACCIDENT, POCHENKOV WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY FORMAL IN HIS RESPONSES. OUR ORIGINAL APPOINTMENT HAD EVEN BEEN POSTPONED OVER WEEK-END. THUS MINE ACCIDENT APPEARS, AT LEAST AT PRESENT, TO BE A VERY SENSITIVE MATTER FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE COAL INDUSTRY.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER WE SHOULD PURSUE POSSIBLE OPENING FOR EXCHANGES IN COAL-MINE SAFETY. IN THIS REGARD, NOTE THAT ROBERT BARRETT, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE U.S. MINING ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY ADMINISTRATION, LED AN AMERICAN MINE-SAFETY DELEGATION TO THE USSR IN SEPTEMBER, 1977. REPORT ON DELEGATION VISIT, INCLUDING VISIT TO DONBAS DEEP MINE, IS REF C, WHICH WE SUGGEST BE PROVIDED TO SCHMIDT.
MATLOCK

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